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Statement submitted by Sahkar Social Welfare Association, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Please recycle

Statement

Women in Pakistan; Gender Gap and Honor killings

Pakistan is a developing country and came into being in 1947 as a new Muslim state, but civilization first developed in the Indus river valley around 3,000 BC (before Christ) in present Pakistan. The population of Pakistan is about 190 million and more than half part of its people live in rural and backward areas. Pakistan has two genres of laws' sharia and civil law. Constitution of the country categorizes equality between women and men, but despite that setback, in Sindh, there are spreading the honour crimes, dowry system, marriages of women with holy Book, child marriages and forced marriages still remain, sale and purchase of a woman and the giving girls or women to marry in the shape of compensation to the victim's family. In rural Sindh, people mostly purchase a woman in the shape of marriage to use her for sowing and harvesting of agriculture and rearing of livestock. There are several strict and brutal societal rites in Pakistan which are not only taint on the name of humankind but also are against the teaching of Islam where the religion prohibits the likes of these actions. Furthermore, behind these treacherous acts different offenses has also been commonly committed as acid throwing on the faces of women. In fact, the woman could not get a position which should have to be owned by her. According to database of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan there were 987 cases of honour killings with 1096 females and 88 males of whom at least 170 were minors. The above cases reported by The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan which have observed through various forms of their sources while unreported cases were silent alarming than above figure.

Honour killings

There are a couple words of "honour killing" (Karo Kari) means homicide of a woman and or a man, if any girl or woman caught or labelled with any male in objectionable position, then she (kari) and her co-accused (karo) will be killed by her family or community. Even though a woman can prove that she is a victim of rape cases, ultimately she may be killed by her family in the name of honour and they are proud of what they did. Honour killings are a tough tradition in a tribal antiquated community that is experienced for centuries. According to the historians they claim that honour killing tradition in Pakistan originated with many Baloch tribes of Balochistan and spread to other communities as they migrated to different parts of the Pakistan in the 17th century while Arab progenies migrated to settle in Balochistan. The Sindhi nation has adopted honour killings from a culture of Baloch tribes. As per the report of The United Nations Population Fund, all around the world about 5000 women and girls are killed annually in honour killings and out of the figure approximately, 1000 women are killed in Pakistan per year. It shows clearly that 20 per cent of the total figure of honour killings occur in Pakistan.

Women rights in Islam

Prior to Islam, women were extremely worsened and depriving of their rights and independence by the society and treating women as second-class citizens. Quran and Hadiths declared the respect and honour of women in the religion. The Quran says; "And for women are rights over men, similar to those of men over women." (Qur'an 2:228). Holy prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) said, "Among you the most respectable is the one who respects women and the most disrespectable is the one who disrespect the women."

Gender Gap in Sindh

Sindh province has rich resources, but still stands with a high rate of unemployment, maternal mortality, female illiteracy and gender inequality. According to recent annual gender gap report by World Economic Forum (WEF) Pakistan ranked 144 out of 145, second last in world gender equality. Although, women of Pakistan have earned the Oscar awards and Nobel Prizes, unfortunately, the country rank is increasing to bottom on the Index of gender gap.

Education in rural areas of Sindh

Illiteracy is the main role to increase the honour crimes and gender inequality, approximately there is half population of the male is illiterate and two third population of female cannot write even their names specially who are living in rural areas is upsetting. Among the world Pakistan is listed as one of the lowest literacy rates, as per data of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which reported that Pakistan is listed at 160th in all countries of the world and there is 55 per cent. There is an alarming situation in Pakistan's rural areas, especially in rural of Sindh where the female literacy rate is between five to 15 per cent and in various areas the education of girls is banned by their family on cultural and religious grounds. A common practice observed in this area is mainly witnessed amongst old-age persons who marry teenage girls. Owing to unmatched relationships, and lack of trust, men are very suspicious of their young wives leading to cases of torture in efforts to keep them (wives) under control.

Faislos and Jirgas System (Informal Justice system)

Most cases of honour crimes are jointly settled between complainants and respondents in the courts and or in Faislos / Jirgas. Hereafter, a Faislo or Jirga is fixed up through reps of both groups and lead by the local tribal chief, Wadera or Sardar then a man or boy who has been proved a guilty in the case he has to pay compensation for his life to be secure. While the complainants commonly relatives of the victims, they excuse the respondent due to compensation and force of their relatives, Wadera and Sardar (Landlord).

Furthermore, the major cause of female victims to avoid for reporting their incidents is the ill-mannered attitude by the police, lawyers and prosecutors who would ask shameful interrogations and clear details during the prosecutions usually held in open trials. In the other hand, pressure and attitude of the community are also one of the few reasons to sidestep the cases to report.

Conclusion

The statement concludes that honour killings remains an unsettled matter as the current rules and their implementation have unsuccessful to stop the crime that continues still without any fear, in this situation, there is difficult for women to receive justice owing to the existing system of Law and Tribes. Faisla and Jarga system (non-formal justice system) permits local leaders to create decisions based on their knowledge and local trend and traditions. On the other hand, the concepts of honour (gairat) and aboriginal council system (wadera and sardari nizam) often hushes victims of the crimes. The world has to keep an eye on the said system.

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Statement submitted by Mother of Hope Cameroon Common Initiative Group, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Please recycle

Statement

Enhancing Women and Girls Access to Technology and Communication in Advancing Sustainable Development

Enhancing access to opportunities for women and girls to information in all forms online and offline is a fundamental human right and a catalyst for their empowerment to be equal contributors to societal issues and development. To ensure gender equality, women and girls need to be trained and they need to be given the opportunities from a young age, as well as measures are being taken to create an enabling environment free of intimidation, security threats and harassment against women and girls.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) recognizes key issues that relate to the leading insecurity of families. Articles 3, 7, 9, 11, 12 and 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) highlights States' responsibilities to ensure the equal right of men and women in the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights with respect to opportunities. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Violence against Women (CEDAW, 1979) in its article 11 strongly reiterates the need for States to take appropriate measures in eliminating discrimination against women

According to many studies carried out, it shows that women are marginalized in the media and information and communication industries both in representation as well as in way women are portrayed in the media sector. Although there has been an increase in the number of women representation in media, they mostly occupy junior and non-decision-making positions and very few of them occupy high-level decision-making positions in media and telecommunications organizations. This shows the reluctance of media organizations to incorporate fair gender sensitive guidelines.

With the coming of new information and communications technologies, the media now has far reaching and widespread effects because it has opened many forums that groups of people and most communities can now have access to and participate in media and information and communication technologies. The spread of these new information and communications technologies give women the opportunity to express their views to a wide variety of audiences without the bottlenecks that are found in the traditional media (radio, television). Through the new information and communications technologies, women are educated and empowered in almost every aspect of life (politics, agriculture, entrepreneurship, education, health, etc).

Despite these many opportunities offered by information and communications technologies, many women still face many challenges. For example, some women do not have easy access to information and communications technologies and others do not even know how to use them. Women are under-represented in companies that design programs used in media, information and communications technologies and this reflects in the gender Insensitive content found on the internet about women. The few women who find themselves in these companies usually occupy junior land low paid positions like secretaries and clerks while men dominate in high paid managerial and engineering positions. This is not because women are under qualified and are incapable of handling such posts of responsibility but because the male dominated industry is designed to maintain women at the junior level and hinder them progressing in the company's hierarchy. Not training and hiring qualified women in senior managerial and decision-making positions in the media, information and communications technologies industries could have a negative economic effect not only on the woman but the whole community as well because it will imply less jobs created and less financial and intellectual wealth utilized.

For women to be able to fully participate in media and information and communications technologies, it starts with empowering the girl child right from the primary education level where she has to be given as much exposure and access to ICTs as the male child. She must be encouraged to take up and excel in the sciences, mathematics and computer sciences so that she too can have the opportunity to venture into software and hardware engineering. For the gap that exists between the female gender and the media, and information and communications technologies industry, she needs to be educated and given the opportunity to prove her worth in this male dominated industry.

In concluding, woman can successfully integrate in the media and information and communications industries and this will empower the woman financially, engage her intellectually and even open up further forums and gender sensitive contents that can have a far-reaching effect in terms of sensitization and information, even in the conception and design of gender sensitive contents found on the internet.

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Statement submitted by DHAN (Development of Humane Action) Foundation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Please recycle

Statement

Women Empowerment key to sustainable developmental goals

It is a common knowledge that while Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs) are universal from gender perspective given the historical and cultural factors in large part of the globe. Women are, by and large, hit hard by deprivations, disabilities from holistic development perspectives. In other words, by far, women cry for greater attention of strategies and intervention to achieve sustainable development goals. The very fact that some of the sustainable development goals are dedicated exclusively to women related issues bear this out.

DHAN Foundation with its mission to address, reduce and eliminate the multi-dimensional poverty recognize the utmost importance of empowering women and now has a record of 25 years of work in enhancing the gender equality through the self-help concept for the social, economic and financial inclusion which empowers women for well-informed political participation on equal footing with men. Women represent huge part of marginalised communities who remain unorganised and dispersed, with little knowledge and understanding about the power of collective voice and action. Keeping this in view, DHAN has organised women with intensive enabling process under institutional framework, founded on the concept of self-help and mutuality. Stitching a network of self-help groups of women and their federations with each federation comprising of 5000 to 6000 families through participatory planning of vulnerabilities and disabilities from social, financial and economic perspectives a string of societies have been organised in rural and urban areas (slums). The social capital of women self-help groups and federation laid the foundation for a multifaceted enabling process to engender development, though women are fulcrum to the institutional building process, their families are the locus for the multifaceted developmental interventions.

Women federations as sustainable social infrastructure

The institutional building process brought about active participation of women in development rather than being a passive part of it. This paid development dividends in terms of women lifting themselves out of poverty and emerging as leaders in their own right and building grassroots governance at self-help groups and federation level. Confidence and self-esteem in their own ability to take control pace of development are growing. What is more, social capital started expanding organically with community contributions in terms of resources and setting the stage for scaling up to reach large numbers. Another significant fallout of this strong social capital of women has been the networking and the collaboration with mainstream institutions such as Governments, banks which were shunning them earlier, not to speak of the social harmony emerging as a quiet by product. Thus, building social capital has enabled the women in large numbers to achieve social inclusion as against the marginalisation experienced before. Health and education neglected earlier or beyond the reach of women began to get due attention. self-help groups Federations have been emerging as civic institutions helping in providing access to healthcare and education focussed on life skills and also vocational skills.

Furthermore, self-help groups emerged as financial intermediaries operating on the strength of the cooperative principles doing savings and credit by and for the members, in effect as micro bank. As they conducted financial transactions on the institutional framework process and system, mainstream banks were attracted towards self-help groups for credit linkage. Beyond credit, self-help groups are realising the full potential of linkage by accessing insurance, pension and digital payment services through the banking system thereby achieving holistic financial inclusion. Without

the strength of the social capital and the chemistry, attendant scale, the large scale financial inclusion would not have been possible. More importantly, each of the self-help groups and their federations have become financially sustainable through their financial transactions in all their financial services within the group and their linkage with the banks. In this process, several financial orthodoxies have been broken and several innovations in products and processes have been demonstrated to provide financial services to poor particularly women. The concept of cash credit (credit on tap) — uninterrupted supply of credit to women through the self-help groups is a case in point. Even more significant is the emphatic statement that poor can and wants to save. It is a tribute to their habit of thrift and frugality that their own savings have funded more than 50 per cent of the loans taken by the women of these self-help groups.

It has been demonstrated across contexts by the self-help groups and their federations that besides access to financial services through their own social capital, they have emerged as an effective demand stream to access other important public services such as water and sanitation, healthcare, education including vocational education for livelihood skills. The social capital and the underlying mutuality has given space to enhance the livelihoods of women, nay, generating new opportunities including scaling up. This is where federations have livelihood collectives for scaling up and making small business and enterprises be it farm or nonfarm as a viable proposition.

Above all, little did DHAN imagine about the ingenuity of the women members of the self-help Groups (SHGs) in sheathing a social shield among themselves with each natural and manmade disasters evoking moral, monetary and material support from the women members in rushing the succour to the disaster hit areas. They have also contributed their mite as donation in building newer federations thereby augmenting social capital.

To conclude from DHAN's experience of enabling process of building social capital of women, it has been amply demonstrated that achieving sustainable development goals is predicated on empowering women from holistic perspective. It is absolutely necessary if not sufficient.